

# Graduate Studies in the United States

# Why Study in the USA? Choice

- 1000 universities offer graduate study to 2.6 million graduate and professional students
- 277,000 international graduate students
- 755,000 graduate degrees awarded annually, including 60,600 PhDs.

# Why Study in the USA?

- \$55 billion spent annually on research
- 40% of total world R&D spending
- 38% of patented new technology inventions by the industrialized nations of the OECD

# Why study in the US? Results

- Employs 37% of OECD researchers
- Produces 35% of total world publications
- 49% of citations
- 63% of highly cited publications,
- Employs 70% of the world's Nobel Prize winners and 66% of its most-cited individuals

# Why Study in the USA?

- Flexibility: Design your own program, work collaboratively with other departments and universities, gain practical experience in your field, attend conferences.
- People: Dynamic, respected, and diverse, with high proportion of international students.
- Personal: Leadership, independence, challenge, experience, networking, relationships, communication skills, collaboration, etc.

# I. What is Graduate Study? (Post Graduate Education)

- Master's Degree: 2 years beyond the four-year Bachelor's degree (course based, research based or both)
  - MA = Master of Arts of MS = Master of Science
  - MBA = Master of Business Administration
  - MPH = Master in Public Health
- Doctoral Degree: 3-5 years beyond the Master's degree
  - PhD = Doctor of Philosophy

# U.S. System

- BA is 4 years and BS is 5 for engineering
- MA is post BA and most often 2 years
- PhD combines coursework and research and is 3-7 years after the MA
- Students can start the PhD after the BA/S



# Which is Better for You?

## MASTER'S

- More practical
- More professional
- For those who want to work at a high professional level

## DOCTORATE

- More research-oriented
- For those who want to teach in universities and do research



# Differences in U.S. System

- PhD students
  - 2-3 years of coursework before research and thesis writing
  - Examinations to demonstrate capacity
  - Teaching or lab assistant duties
- Master's thesis or practicals/workshops

# Duration- PhD

- Phase One: 3 years of coursework in the student's field
- Preliminary/comprehensive exams
- Oral and written exams
- Phase 2: 2-4 years of research and writing the dissertation
- Total time: 5-8 years

# Survival of the Fittest

- Overall, 57% of students who begin a PhD program in the US will complete their degree within ten years, approximately 30% will drop out or be dismissed, and the remaining 13% of students will continue on past ten years

# II How the Admissions Process Works

# Key Factors in Graduate Admission

## ⌘ Shared responsibility- Graduate School and Departments

- Centralized
- Decentralized
- Hybrid

# Role of the Graduate School

- Ensures basic eligibility
- Monitors receipt of documents
- Evaluates credentials and grades
- Refers application to department
- Maintains standards and policies
- Processes fees

# Credential Evaluation

- Purpose
- How is it done?

Ministries and Universities can:

- Provide agencies with all course descriptions and information about how classes are taught including learning outcomes
- Ensure that web pages are translated into English
- Provide standard information on MOHE accredited universities
- Detailed information on systems and grading



# Departmental Review

- General admission criteria
  - Previous degree(s)
  - Outstanding test scores and GPA
  - Strong Letters of Recommendation
  - Convincing and memorable Statement of Purpose
- Specific admission criteria
  - Knowledge/results in the department's fields of research
  - Experience in/potential for research or teaching
  - Difficulty of classes taken as an undergraduate
  - Prestige of undergraduate institution

# Departmental Review

- Determines Conditional Admission
  - What is conditional admission?
  - Why will some departments not give CA?
  - How can a student determine if a department has CA?

# Admission Committees Also Look For

- Writing Skills
- Research Experience
- English Mastery, including spoken English
- Evidence of depth and breadth of undergraduate program
- Computer Skills
- Teaching experience
- Knowledge of the program, faculty and their research
- Thorough and up-to-date knowledge of the field of study

# III. The Application Process

# Planning the Process

- April-August: think, read, research, select schools and programs. Plan your essays and cultivate your recommenders.
- September-December: take GRE/GMAT/TOEFL, write essays, get transcripts and recommendations, fill out applications, and communicate with professors.
- January 1: Complete and mail all applications.
- April-May: Admissions and funding decisions announced.

# Research the School

- English Language on campus?
- Conditional admission for the desired program?
- Sponsored student support?
- Family housing and support for families (if necessary)?

# Research the Program

- Ask yourself:
  - Are they strong in your field and specialization?
  - Are there research and practical opportunities?
  - What are the admission requirements?
  - Will you meet people who will become lifelong associates?



# Who Are You Going to Work With?

- Your professor/supervisor is the most important element of your graduate study.
- Choose your professor before choosing your school.
- Communicate: Ask specific questions to EducationUSA Advisors and the Graduate Department.

# Application Components

- Application forms: biodata, etc.
- Curriculum Vitae
- Transcripts
- Statement of Purpose
- Teachers' Recommendations
- Standardized Test Scores
- Certification of Finances

# Official Academic Records

- Both in English and in the native language
- Official academic records include:
  - Certified copies of official degrees or diplomas
  - List of courses and grades for all post-secondary education
- International Standard: Records should be sent in a sealed envelope with the application; alternatively, the issuing institution should send the records directly. Students should never send originals!
- Photocopies should be certified by the university or other appropriate official

# Letters of Recommendation

- Why?
- Focus: Academic achievements or professional potential
- Most require on line forms to be completed
- If paper is approved, the student should provide the referee with a stamped envelope addressed to the institution marked “Re: Application of [student’s name]” when asking for a recommendation
- Applicants should allow plenty of time for the referees to write the letter, and follow up to ensure that they are sent in time

# Points to be discussed

- Intellectual ability
- Knowledge of field
- Work habits
- Motivation to pursue study
- Seriousness of purpose
- Emotional maturity
- Resourcefulness and initiative
- Adaptability to new situations
- Leadership qualities
- Potential for future contribution in the field

# Why a Personal Statement?

- Can be the difference between admission and denial.
- Goal: clear, concise, and persuasive
  - academic or research interests
  - reasons for wanting to pursue graduate study
  - reasons for choosing a certain institution
  - career goals
  - Personal background/extracurricular activities
- Tailor to each institution - answer the questions asked!

# Conditional Admission

- What IS Conditional Admission?
- What does it mean?
- Who offers it?
- Need TOEFL when applying for Conditional Admission
- Need to be evaluated how many months of ESL
- EducationUSA Compiling List of Programs



# Application YES

- Some demonstration of English proficiency
- Completed Application
- Letters of Recommendation
- Sponsored Student Letter and Contact Information

# Application- No

- Photos
- CVs

# Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Waivers

- 1974 requires that students be advised of their rights concerning educational records, such as letters of recommendation.
- FERPA gives important rights, including:
  1. The right of students to inspect their student records
  2. The right to challenge incorrect information in those records
  3. The right to keep student records private

# What is the U.S. doing to advise students

- EducationUSA in Iraq
  - Facebook – StudyUSAIraq
  - <http://iraq.usembassy.gov>
  - BaghdadEducationAdv@state.gov
- [www.educationusa.info](http://www.educationusa.info)  
webinars, EducationUSA You Tube

# Questions?

Thank you and Best Wishes for Success

*[www.educationusa.info](http://www.educationusa.info)*